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University of California
College of Agriculture
Agricultural Experiment Station
Berkeley, California

ORGANIZING VICTORY WORK

HOW FARMERS CAN HELP

by

J. M. Tinley

March, 1943

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The purpose of this report is to indicate (1) what individual farmers can do and (2) what farming communities can do to ease the farm labor situation during 1943. Major emphasis is placed on what can be done to insure better utilization of Victory workers, both school children and adult city volunteers.

What You (a Farmer) Can Do

(1) Estimate as soon and as accurately as possible:
  (a) The amount of permanent labor you will require in 1943.
  (b) The amount of seasonal labor you will require and the approximate time such labor will be needed.
(2) Put living accommodations on your farm into the best possible condition, due consideration being given to the scarcity of materials and building labor.
(3) Plan early to adopt every possible labor saving device.
(4) See that you have ample compensation insurance, that everything possible is done to avoid accidents and that you have adequate first-aid equipment. If you do not carry compensation insurance, the workers should be so advised, in accordance with legal requirements. It would be as well also to inform the dispatching agency.
(5) Notify local labor-dispatching agencies in ample time of the number of workers needed daily. Exercise unusual care in stating needs so that all workers provided will be occupied a full day.
(6) Be sure that the labor- dispatching agency is supplied with explicit directions on how to get to your farm.
(7) Be sure that there are sufficient buckets, boxes, ladders, and knocking poles and other harvesting equipment available in the orchard or field each day before the workers arrive.

1/ Towards the end of 1942, members of the staff of the Giannini Foundation and Agricultural Extension Service of the College of Agriculture undertook an extensive survey of the agricultural labor situation in California. Farmers, farm advisors, agricultural commissioners, packing-house managers, Y.M.C.A.'s, Y.W.C.A.'s, Victory workers, and high school authorities in as many sections of the state were contacted. This report attempts to summarize the information gathered on only one phase of the problem; namely, that of individual and community responsibility. The analysis is intended to be constructive. Any criticism contained herein is designed solely to direct attention to weaknesses to be remedied.

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(8) Provide workers with toilet facilities.
(9) Provide workers with ample drinking water.
(10) Be sure that each and all workers know the nature of the work they are to perform and that each crew is supplied with a supervisor or foreman.
(11) Explain as clearly as possible just how the various tasks are to be performed. (If the supervisor or foreman is acquainted with the mechanics of the task, there will be no need for such explanation.)
(12) Abide by the wage scales for different tasks agreed upon by the farmers in your locality.
(13) Do not "pirate" labor from your neighbors by offering higher wages or other forms of inducement.
(14) Rely upon the employing or dispatching agency in your locality to see that sufficient labor is supplied to you and your neighbors .
(15) Make a point of seeing that your workers are acquainted with the recreational facilities available and urge them to make the fullest possible use of such facilities.
(16) Treat Victory workers (school youngsters or adults from cities) with every reasonable consideration. Remember that these people are giving up their spare time in order to help you and other farmers harvest your crops.

What Your Farming Community Can Do

At the earliest possible date each farming community should organize a local labor coordinating agency somewhat on the lines of the County War Manpower Committees. It is preferable that such coordinating agencies should represent a fairly compact farming community, such as the farms surrounding a country town. In some counties where agricultural conditions are relatively uniform and where the number of farmers is small, one coordinating agency may be sufficient; in other counties where the number of farmers is large and agricultural areas scattered and well-defined, several local coordinating agencies may be desirable. In such cases a central county coordinating committee may be nceessary. These coordinating agencies should represent as nearly as is feasible all types of farmers and farmers' organizations in the community. In most instances it would be advisable for the coordinating agency to organize one or more subcommittees to handle specific aspects of the problem. The number of such subcommittees would, of course, depend upon the variety of problems encountered in each area and the voluntary personnel available.

The functions of this local coordinating committee would be as follows: 3/

A. Subcommittee on Labor Needs.
1. Ascertain, as soon as possible, from each farmer (by questionnaire or other method):
(a) What his regular and peak needs for labor will be during the coming year.
(b) What regular and seasonal labor (including family labor) is in prospect.
(c) When and for how long additional seasonal labor will be needed.

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(d) For what tasks will such labor be needed.
(e) From the information so obtained, make a summary analysis to show the total additional seasonal needs for labor and the time such labor will be needed.
(Note: This committee should impress upon farmers the importance of making close and careful estimates of their labor needs, especially their seasonal needs.)

2. As the season advances, make occasional surveys or checks as to the size of different crops to be harvested and the condition of such crops.
(Note: Such information would indicate whether the original estimates as to numbers of seasonal workers and as to time such labor is needed should be revised upwards or downwards.)

3. During the harvesting season, obtain from farmers some time in advance (possibly daily or even weekly in advance if there is little variation in day-to-day requirements) a statement of the number of workers who will be needed and the tasks to be performed.
(Note: This committee should impress upon farmers the importance of not overstating their daily needs. This would be unfair to other farmers in the community and would result in poor use of such labor as is available.)

4. This committee should cooperate with similar committees in adjacent communities and counties and with such regional or statewide agency as may be set up to determine and supply total farm manpower needs.

B. Subcommittee on Living Accommodations.

1. Make a survey, as soon as possible, of the living accommodations available on individual farms in the locality, giving special attention to the cleanliness of such quarters and the situation as to toilet and cooking facilities.

2. Suggest to individual farmers possible improvements that can be made in view of existing shortages.

3. Rate accommodations on some such basis as: A, Very Good; B, Good; C, Habitable; D, Unsatisfactory.

4. Survey all vacant houses and tourist camp facilities available. Inquire as to whether such can be used or rented and under what conditions.

5. As the harvesting season approaches and more definite knowledge is obtained as to the amount of seasonal labor needed and as to the number of families that may volunteer, make arrangements for the use or rent of such houses or tourist camps as may appear necessary

6. As far as possible arrange for a flat rent for each volunteer worker (which may vary with the quality of the accommodations supplied.
(Note: It is desirable that city families that volunteer for work know beforehand what accommodations will be available and what they will have to pay. The committee should insure that it will receive from city workers sufficient rent to cover the cost of renting and preparing houses or other accommodations.)

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7. Obtain by any feasible means (by borrowing or renting) tables, beds, mattresses (perhaps also cooking equipment, cutlery, and crockery) for furnishing such accommodations. Inventories should be made of all equipment furnished and city workers should be required as part of the hiring contract to replace any damage above fair wear and tear.

8. If it becomes evident that a large and regular supply of city volunteer workers will be forthcoming, insure either that there are sufficient restaurant facilities available, or explore the possibility of establishing a central messhall. If such a hall is provided, the committee should undertake to hire competent help and should budget possible expenses so that city volunteers can be informed beforehand what meals will cost.

C. Subcommittee on Worker Training and Supervision.

1. This subcommittee should undertake to survey as soon as possible the nature of all tasks performed on farms in the locality.

2. These tasks should be classified carefully as to the extent of training necessary for volunteer workers and also what tasks can be performed by younger children, older children, men and women, and the amount of physical exertion required for each task.

3. Either undertake to develop, if possible, a course of pre-harvest training or cooperate fully with any agency (for example, local schools) which establish such a course of training.

4. Give special care to the training of supervisors and crew foremen. Impress upon farmers the necessity of careful selection of foremen. Such men (or women) should not only know the task or tasks to be performed but should also know how to handle people. The foremen (under the supervision of the farmer) should organize the work in orchards and fields so as to reduce waste time and loafing. The committee should be prepared to give advice to individual farmers on how to plan harvesting operations so as to obtain most effective use of the labor force available.

5. This committee might also be entrusted with the duty of studying all feasible labor saving methods -- such as the use of automatic knockers and tarpaulins (or other material) to catch prunes and almonds knocked off trees.

6. This committee could also probably handle the matter of equipment for workers. Farmers should be encouraged in every possible way to have all necessary harvesting equipment available in the fields when workers arrive so as to reduce idle time. The committee should investigate all complaints from workers arising from lack or inadequacy of equipment and endeavor to correct same. Such complaints should, if possible, be routed through the crew supervisor or foreman.

7. Among other things this committee should undertake to advise Victory workers as to suitable clothing, shoes, camping, and cooking equipment necessary.

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D. Subcommittee on Wages.

1. This subcommittee (probably in cooperation with the subcommittee on worker training) should make a survey of all tasks to be performed in the locality.

2. On the basis of this information scales of wages should be drawn up for the various tasks. These wage scales should be so arranged that a reasonably efficient worker will earn approximately the same average wage per hour regardless of the task performed. This may necessitate a sliding scale of wages depending upon the probable yield of each field or orchard. Some variation may be necessary to allow a differentially higher wage for tasks that are disagreeable or require special skill or aptitude. Supervisors and foremen would be paid a somewhat higher wage than ordinary workers.

3. This subcommittee should coordinate its activities with those of similar subcommittees in adjacent localities or with those of a central labor authority if such be appointed.

4. The subcommittee should investigate the necessity for modifying wage scales as the season advances. Increases (or decreases) in wages may be approved after checking with adjacent committees and the central labor authority.

5. All complaints regarding wages by workers or by farmers should be carefully investigated and adjustment made if possible.

6. This subcommittee could also be entrusted with the task of insuring that all farmers carry adequate compensation insurance, that all reasonable precautions are taken to prevent accidents and that all farmers have adequate first-aid equipment.

E. Subcommittee on Transportation.

1. Survey as soon as possible all transportation facilities (trucks, busses, and cars) that will be available for transportation of workers. These would include school busses and trucks and cars of individual farmers.

2. Draw up a plan whereby the trucks of one farmer (which may be idle at certain times) can be used for the transportation of workers (or farm products) of other farmers. Arrange for fair scales of compensation for the use of such equipment.

3. If adequate transportation facilities are not available locally, make what arrangements are possible for obtaining additional facilities from other areas (for example, use of busses operated by city schools).

4. Obtain from all farmers in the locality detailed instructions on how to reach their farms. Each farm should be located accurately upon a master map.

5. During the harvesting season, insure that each truck driver (or operator of whatever transportation service is available) is supplied with detailed instruction on how to reach the farms where

work is to be performed.

(Note: This subcommittee should work closely with the committee on labor needs in order to allocate its transportation facilities efficiently each day during the harvesting season.)

F. Subcommittee on Recreation.

1. This committee should undertake to survey all local recreational facilities and also to list all nearby places of interest suitable for picnics or hikes.

2. Arrangements should be made to have all public and, wherever possible, private swimming pools made available for Victory workers.

3. Some vacant field or school ground should be secured for volley ball, baseball, and other open-air games. Perhaps matches could be arranged with workers in nearby communities.

4. A tentative program of dances, community singing, and lectures should be arranged.

5. One or more public halls or school rooms should be fitted with ping-pong and card tables.

6. When workers arrive, arrangements should be made for the latter to appoint a committee to work with the community subcommittee in planning recreation and diversion. The Victory workers are likely to cooperate more wholeheartedly if they feel they have a part in the programs planned.

7. The community committee on recreation would also cooperate with committees representing schools and Y.M.C.A.'s or similar agencies maintaining local labor camps.

These recommendations as to subcommittees and functions are offered merely as suggestions to guide farmers and local communities in organizing beforehand for the important task that lies ahead of us in mobilizing and utilizing volunteer labor for the harvesting of the 1943 crops. The suggestions may be regarded as an indication of what can be done at the farm or community level. The plans adopted and the subcommittees formed would depend largely upon conditions in each locality. A high degree of flexibility would be essential so that functions and subcommittees can be modified to meet unforeseen changes. Most of the functions outlined above have to be performed by some agency, if we are to mobilize and use efficiently a restricted and inadequately trained labor force. The farmer and the local community would seem to be the most logical agencies to undertake most of the functions outlined above. The most important thing, however, is that organization take place without delay. It would be little short of a tragedy if part of the food which is so urgently needed in our war effort remains unharvested because of lack of forward planning.

If a plan of community organization, as outlined above, is adopted, additional work will be thrown upon farmers and farm leaders especially in the months ahead of the harvesting season. This cannot be avoided. It is possible

that local townspeople may volunteer as a contribution to our war effort to perform a considerable amount of the clerical work that will be inevitable. Such cooperation should be enlisted wherever possible. Let us remember too that if such organization takes place, farmers will be doing for themselves in a highly democratic way work that would otherwise have to be undertaken by a governmental agency. The only way to minimize an increase in governmental activity is to do as much as possible ourselves.

Government vs. Community Action

Several weeks ago the author travelled with two prominent California farmers, who discussed at some length the dangers of government regulation of agriculture and the farm labor problem during the past season.

Farmer A, who had been very outspoken in his condemnation of "governmental regulation of agriculture," nevertheless contended that the solution of the farm labor problem was the "government's baby." He argued that if the government undertook to tell farmers what to grow, the government had to assume the responsibility of seeing that farmers were supplied with sufficient labor to produce and harvest their crops and care for their livestock. He considered that farmers should organize so as to bring sufficient pressure upon the administration to provide more labor for farmers.

Farmer B adopted a different and seemingly more reasonable attitude. Although he too deplored the expansion of governmental power, he considered that this was inevitable during time of war. He believed that the administration was in the best position to determine the total food needs for ourselves and our allies. He went on to say that he regarded this nation's food program as a cooperative effort between the government, farmers, labor, processors, and handlers of farm products. He, therefore, contended that farmers individually and collectively should do everything in their power to find a solution for certain aspects of the farm labor problem. He stated that if farmers were prepared to assume responsibility for the solution of these aspects of the problem, they could then turn to the state and federal governments for assistance in solving other aspects of the problem. He pointed out that the government should insure that key workers in agriculture were not drafted into the armed forces and were not drawn into other war industries where they may be used less efficiently. He also claimed that the government was the only agency which could undertake the over-all allocation of labor between agriculture and other war industries and coordinate properly new and untapped sources of labor.

Farmer B's arguments appear to be essentialyy sound and reasonable. The information collected during the course of this investigation indicates that the great majority of the farmers in California are of the same general opinion. Although many aspects of the farm labor problem are of such a nature that they can be dealt with effectively only on a statewide or even nationwide basis, there are several things that individual farmers can do and still more things that each farming community can do to improve the labor situation during the coming season. If a difficult labor situation is to be improved, each farming community should begin organizing immediately for the effective determination of labor needs, and for the mobilization of all local resources for efficient utilization of such volunteer and other labor as may become available.

Determination of Labor Needs

Farmers usually have little difficulty in determining the number of permanent hands necessary for planting, cultivation, and harvesting of crops and for care of livestock and equipment. Such requirements do not vary greatly from year to year. It is, however, much more difficult for individual farmers to determine ahead just how much seasonal labor will be needed for harvesting and just when such labor will be required. Although acreages of crops and fruit orchards may be fixed, the volume of production per acre varies considerably from year to year due to climatic and other conditions over which farmers have little or no control. A spell of warm weather may hasten the maturing of crops and fruits; a spell of cool weather may postpone and prolong the harvesting period. Unsatisfactory prices when fruits and vegetables are ready for the market may discourage the farmer from picking.

Farmers are often criticized for their tendency to overestimate their seasonal labor requirements. Such critics, however, often fail to realize that there are so many uncertain factors that close calculation is difficult. In normal times the prudent farmer would tend to stress maximum needs so that he can be assured of an adequate supply of labor should there be a combination of favorable production conditions and prices. This is sound business sense, especially for those farmers who have to depend upon sufficient income coming in during a few short weeks to cover operating expenses incurred the year round.

During the 1942 harvesting season many employing agencies were unable to secure sufficient workers to meet all the needs of farmers in their areas. For example, the combined needs of all farmers may have been for 400 workers but only 300 were available. Under such circumstances there is considerable incentive for a farmer who needs only 10 workers to ask for 15 or more, in the hope that his allotment will come nearer to 10 than if he stated his needs accurately. This urge to overstate needs would be reduced if the employing agency is able to secure an adequate supply of workers for the community's needs.

Because of the very restricted supply of both permanent and seasonal labor likely to be available in 1943, it is of paramount importance that each and every farmer exercise unusual care and moderation in assessing needs and applying for labor. Our national goal will not be reached if some farmers and some farming areas get more labor than is needed whereas other farmers and other areas get less labor. Tomatoes grown in Stanislaus County are just as important from a nutritional standpoint as tomatoes grown in Yolo County . Our common purpose will be ill-served if Stanislaus County obtains a share of labor that is proportionately in excess of its needs, whereas Yolo County obtains a share which is below its needs. There is real danger that areas with recreational facilities will attract a larger proportion of volunteer city workers than areas lacking such facilities. The danger is enhanced, if the more favored area overstresses its needs.

Many volunteer city workers who went out to harvest crops on week ends complained that some farmers who needed say 10 pickers would ask for 20. Instead of working 8 or 9 hours as they had planned, they found they could do all the work allotted to them in 4 or 5 hours. Most of these city workers made a real sacrifice to work on farms on Saturdays and Sundays. They neglected work in their homes or gardens and not infrequently used their own

transportation. They objected to sacrificing a full day to do 4 or 5 hours work on a farm, especially when they hear from other volunteers working in the same area that other farmers had insufficient labor.

Although farmers have difficulty in estimating before harvesting time the amount of labor they will require and the time such labor will be needed, they should be able to determine their day-to-day needs during harvest time more accurately. Farmers who obtain too many workers prevent other farmers, whose products are just as important, from obtaining sufficient workers. Such practices are just as wasteful as labor used inefficiently in war plants. Even more important is the fact that city volunteer workers become annoyed and discouraged and hesitate to again offer their services.

Living Accommodations on Farms

Much has been written during recent years about farm living accommodations for seasonal workers. There has been a tendency to overemphasize and dramatize the situation. Nevertheless, although living accommodations on most farms have been improved considerably within recent years, such facilities on other farms are either nonexistent or are unsatisfactory, especially for city families who volunteer for farm work during their vacations. It is unreasonable to expect a family which owns a clean and comfortable home in a city to work for a week or longer on a farm and live in a dirty, ramshackle hut with unsatisfactory toilet and cooking facilities. Even itinerant workers are more "choosey" now than they were a few years ago because there are available to them numerous other avenues of employment.

The importance of satisfactory housing of farm workers is indicated by frequent statements made by persons interviewed to the effect that farmers who were able to provide clean and sanitary living quarters for their own crews had less difficulty in obtaining and keeping labor than farmers who had no or inadequate facilities.

Seasonal farm labor during 1942 came mainly from five sources: (1) regular itinerant labor, such as fruit or cotton pickers and beet toppers, (2) school children, who worked for a week or longer on farms or in farming areas, (3) school children who worked week ends or on certain days in nearby farming areas, (4) adult volunteer workers who worked at nearby farms only on week ends or occasionally during the week, and (5) a relatively small number of city families who worked on farms for periods of several days or longer. There is no housing problem for adult city workers and school children who worked at harvesting by the day and who travelled to and from their work each day. The majority of school children who went from cities to work in more distant farming areas were housed either in schools or buildings on farms or in temporarily constructed camps. Our information indicates that with few exceptions such living facilities were adequate and sanitary, although some minor improvements could have been provided. In a few cases there were complaints that the living facilities were cramped and dirty or that toilet facilities were inadequate. School authorities, Y.M.C.A.'s, Y.W.C.A.'s, and other similar agencies are certain to insist upon proper accommodations during the coming season.

Housing facilities for city families that are prepared to work in farming areas for some time need not differ widely from those provided for year-round workers. Many farms have facilities that are adequate in every reasonable respect. Because of shortages and priorities, it may be difficult to provide new buildings or to install satisfactory toilet and other facilities.

Although very few city families spent their vacations working on farms during the past season, larger numbers may be willing to do so during the coming season if satisfactory arrangements and contacts could be made. In fact, this constitutes one of the most important potential sources of seasonal farm labor. There appears to be no good reason why such labor should not prove equally or even more satisfactory than school labor after a few days for training and for physical hardening. City families, however, will volunteer for periods of farm work only if they can be assured of satisfactory living accommodations.

Another way of handling this problem would be on a community basis. In several farming areas there are homes that have been vacated by Japanese or are unused for one reason or another. In many areas too there are vacant tourist camps. The community could undertake before the start of the harvesting season to put such houses or camps into shape for occupancy. Some agency would have to undertake to rent such properties or obtain permission for their use as a community enterprise. This agency could also have the responsibility for seeing (1) that the houses or tourist cottages are properly cleaned and made fit for use, (2) that water, electricity and other facilities are available, and (3) that these quarters are provided with beds, mattresses, and tables. The city family would be expected to supply bedding, towels, and so on.

Some city families would prefer to supply their own meals. As a general rule, however, all the members of a city family would find farm work so exhausting, at least for the first week or so, that they will prefer to eat out. In many farming communities, there are few restaurants and their facilities are likely to be overtaxed at the height of the harvesting season. The writer and his family worked at Penryn last July. There was only one small restaurant, which has since been closed. It often took nearly two hours to get dinner.

In farming areas which hope to attract numbers of city families for farm work, it may be desirable for the community agency to provide a central messhall where the city families could take their meals. Perhaps arrangements could be made for such families to mess at one of the camps provided for school children.

A charge sufficient to cover costs could be made for meals and for living accommodations. Most city families would greatly appreciate such a service and it would serve as an important drawing point in such a community where the idea is found to be feasible. Several communities are seriously considering the possibility of providing such a service during the coming season.

Supervision of Victory Workers and Planning of Tasks

Opinion among farmers as to the efficiency of volunteer school and adult workers from the city differs widely. A relatively small number of farmers consider such labor so inefficient that they claim they will not employ school and city workers again. At the other extreme are farmers who are enthusiastic about school labor and claim that their experience showed school children to be more efficient labor last season than regular itinerant pickers. Between these two extremes are all shades of opinion.

From information gained during the course of this study it would appear that the efficiency of school and city adults depended largely upon the supervision and guidance they received from the farmer and his regular help. Many farmers apparently did not realize that most school children and adult workers from the city had little or no knowledge of farming operations. They did not know how to pick fruit or vegetables such as peas, beans, and tomatoes. Such operations become relatively simple tasks when a few fundamental principles have been mastered. Youngsters who know nothing about these basic principles are likely to become "bulls in a china shop" if turned into an orchard or field without instruction or supervision. On the other hand, they seem to have done a pretty good job where they received the necessary preliminary instruction and were kept under proper supervision. This is well illustrated by the following true incidents.

Example A. Farmer X in an important tomato producing area appealed to a school in a nearby city for school children. About 20 children, girls and boys, were allotted to him to work for a period of three weeks. They were transported to and from the farm daily in a school bus. They were just the average run of city school children, only two or three having ever been on a farm. Mr. X who seemed to have a unique knowledge of adolescent psychology, took the youngsters into his packing house the first day they arrived and gave them a "pep talk" pointing out the importance of their work to our war effort. He divided them into three picking crews each under a leader. He showed the boys and girls where the toilet facilities were. He then took them out to a tomato field and explained to them how tomatoes should be picked so as to avoid injuring the vines and so as to eliminate defective tomatoes. The children were encouraged to ask questions. They were then put to work each on a row. Farmer X visited each child in turn pointing out mistakes and giving encouragement. He warned them not to overdo it the first day or two until they had hardened somewhat. They stopped work for 10 minutes in mid-morning and again in mid-afternoon so that they could go to the packing shed if they needed to use the toilet facilities. The leaders of each crew were asked to discourage loafing and the children were put on their honor not to throw tomatoes. Mr. X visited the fields once or twice each day to keep an eye on the work. Within three days the youngsters were picking tomatoes like veterans and were earning between 50 and 60 cents an hour on a piece work basis.

A few days later Mr. X attended a meeting of tomato farmers, most of whom were complaining bitterly about their volunteer school help. They maintained that the youngsters were loafing, engaged in frequent tomato fights, and were ruining the vines. Mr. X asked them what they had done to organize and supervise the work. In practically every instance the reply was "nothing." He then explained to them what he had done. Most of the farmers present "went

out and did likewise" and were able to report later that they too were entirely satisfied with the job done by school youngsters. The farmers in this locality were loud in their praise of the splendid job done by school children.

Example B. The writer, his wife and son, worked for a month (July, 1942) with the Penryn Fruit Company in Placer County, where he had a unique opportunity not only of learning the problems involved in harvesting and packing fruit, but also of observing the work of several dozen school children. The manager of the Penryn Fruit Company, realizing before the harvesting season opened that the evacuation of the Japanese would result in a serious labor shortage, recruited about two dozen school children (boys and girls) from Auburn and Newcastle for work in the packing house, and about 30 boys from a high school in a metropolitan area for work as pickers and thinners. The latter were housed and fed on the company's property. In addition, picking crews were obtained daily from a Y.M.C.A. Camp at Loomis.

The local youngsters (from Newcastle and Auburn) proved to be most satisfactory. They were much slower than the regular fruit packers, but were careful in their work, regular in attendance, and willing to work long hours (often 10 and 12 hours) on Saturday. They were of course under the constant supervision of the plant superintendent and his wife, who supervised the packing operations.

During the first two or three weeks of the harvesting season considerable difficulty was encountered in dealing with the boys from the metropolitan schools. Several of the boys were physically incapable of doing the work required, a few were discontented for some reason or another, a few were inclined to loaf, and nearly all were homesick. Part of the trouble arose from the fact that the boys in their eagerness to earn big money for the first time in their lives, started in to work a full 8 and 9 hours a day, before they had become accustomed to the climate and inured to the hard work. There was an inevitable reaction evidenced in a slackening after a few days. Another difficulty was that the boys, freed from parental restraint and school discipline, were inclined to overboisterousness. They were not subjected to proper supervision and organized recreation. By the end of the third week several of the boys had either gone or been sent home. Those who remained, however, gradually developed into very satisfactory workers and, after proper supervision had been established, proved both willing and tractable. In fact, the manager of the Penryn Fruit Company was so pleased with his experience with metropolitan high school boys that he plans to use such labor even more extensively during the coming season. The employment of these boys was largely experimental -- a new venture. Many mistakes were made because of inexperience, but these will be rectified as far as possible in the future.

The writer was asked to work with several of the crews to find out what could be done to improve their efficiency. Each picking crew of five or six boys was under a foreman, usually a full-time employee of the Penryn Fruit Company. The Company's field superintendent allotted picking crews to the various orchards and supervised the work of the crews generally. He, however, could not possibly give individual attention to each crew and to each picker. In working with the picking crews, I found that although the youngsters had been taught how to pick and thin fruit, they worked with little system. They would move from a tree in row 1 to a tree in row 5, crisscrossing back and forth. Often trees would be skipped. Some youngsters worked diligently, others loafed. Each youngster broke off work for a rest or for a drink whenever he felt like it. During such a rest period he would talk to the other youngsters

or pelt them with fruit. Most of the crews were dissatisfied with the crew foremen who, although they did no picking, were paid a higher wage.

Experience with these picking crews indicated that planning of the actual work of picking (and thinning) greatly increased the daily output per crew. Work should be so planned that all the crew members take their rest period at the same time. A good plan is to require the crew to work for 55 minutes and then to knock off for 5 minutes. During the hot afternoons the rest period could be increased to 10 minutes. Each youngster in a crew should be made responsible for a row of trees. This makes it possible to spot the loafers. It also makes it easier for the foreman or the field superintendent to find out who is responsible for mistakes, slovenly picking or unnecessary damage to the trees. Wherever possible the crew foreman should also work -- preferably as a pace-setter or as an aid to a slow worker (not a loafer). Much more care should be exercised in selecting foremen. School teachers, older boys, or boys with leadership ability will often make better foremen than local youngsters. Because of the training received this past season, there should be numerous youngsters who will make good crew foremen. Wherever possible too youngsters should be paid on a piece rather than a time basis. The competitive urge should be fully utilized. A system of weekly bonuses (say in war stamps) to the crew member and the crew that picks most fruit may also prove a stimulus for diligent work.

These two examples indicate the great importance of proper instruction, supervision, and planning of work. Numerous other examples of a similar nature came to our notice during the course of this investigation. Moreover, the information gathered indicated that in most instances where school labor proved unsatisfactory, it was due to lack of supervision and failure to give youngsters the proper instruction. It would pay dividends for all farmers to devote several hours to training picking crews and in planning their work more thoroughly.

What has been said about school children can also be said about adult city workers. Here, however, the farmer is in a more difficult position unless the city workers spend a week or more at a job. The great bulk of city volunteers (except those working in packing houses) during the past season were week-end workers, who went out to nearby farms on Saturdays and on Sundays. Such workers usually were sent to different farms and performed different tasks each time they went out -- one day picking tomatoes, the next prunes, and a week later walnuts. In other sections they would have to harvest beans, peas, and various root vegetables, each requiring somewhat different handling. It would be difficult for each farmer to spend several hours each day training different crews.

On the other hand, city workers may prove to be a vital source of supplementary labor. A possible solution for this problem would be for a number of city people to sign up at the beginning of the season, some as tomato pickers, others as prune pickers, and so on. These people could be given the necessary training and one of them could be allocated to each week end crew of city workers to supervise and instruct inexperienced pickers.

More attention should be devoted during the coming season to determining the physical fitness of Victory workers for the various tasks to be performed on the farm or in local packing houses. School girls and women from

the cities were often required illegally to move heavy boxes of fruit or sacks of vegetables. Boys who were not too robust physically were required to move heavy ladders and boxes. Many Victory workers were required to or allowed to perform heavy work before they had become physically toughened.

School children who are expected to work for several weeks should undergo a physical examination before the season opens. If tasks on farms are carefully planned and if school children and other Victory workers are grouped according to age, physique, and fitness, their efficiency will be greatly increased. Younger and smaller children will probably prove better pickers of vegetables, such as carrots, onions, peas, and beans, than would adults or more robust youngsters. Most volunteer Victory workers would not prove very satisfactory in doing heavy manual labor such as beet topping and handling sacks of grain and bales of hay. On the other hand, some tasks can be performed satisfactorily by children under fourteen years of age. For example, boys and girls from twelve to fourteen years of age were found in certain areas to be about as efficient as older children in picking cotton, beans, peas, and the smaller root vegetables, and also picking up prunes, walnuts, and almonds. In planning tasks and work farmers can expect to have the crews constituted as follows:

(1) Boys only.
(2) Girls only.
(3) Girls and boys.
(4) Adult men only.
(5) Adult women only.
(6) Adult men and women.
(7) Families (adult men and women and children of both sexes).

Equipment and Facilities

Many city volunteer workers complained rather bitterly about conditions under which they had to work on week ends on many farms. Families or groups would use their own transportation and drive out to a farm as directed by the local employment service. They would arrive on the farm ready for work only to find that there were no boxes, bags, or poles (for knocking down prunes, almonds, or walnuts). They may have had to wait from 10 to 30 minutes before these were provided. Most farmers provided their picking crews with drinking water. Some farmers, however, did not think it worth while to provide this service, which added much to the comfort and morale of the city worker. On many farms there were no toilet facilities for Victory workers, a situation which was most inconvenient and embarrassing, especially if there were both men and women in the picking crews.

The following example, only one of several reported during the course of the investigation, illustrates the conditions under which several city families had to work and also their reaction. In response to an urgent appeal from the Berkeley office of the U. S. Employment Service, several families volunteered to spend a Sunday working on farms in the Walnut Creek area. They used their own transportation. They were informed before they left Berkeley that they would be employed on picking tomatoes at 12 to 15 cents a box. On their arrival at Walnut Creek, where they reported to the local labor dispatching office, they were informed that most of the farmers wanted prune pickers,

the rate of pay being 25 cents a box. Three families of six persons each were told to report to a farm some 5 miles south of Walnut Creek. They were not given very clear directions for finding the farm. Because of this and other delays in Berkeley and at Walnut Creek, they did not arrive at the farm until two hours after they had left Berkeley.

They reported for work only to be told that the rate of pay would be 22 cents a box if they knocked off the prunes or 18 cents if they just picked up prunes. On arrival in the orchard they found that there were no buckets or knocking poles. Another 15 minutes elapsed while they waited for these to be provided. Meanwhile the farmer's wife and children drove off the farm, dressed in their "Sunday best." When the poles and buckets were eventually forthcoming, the farmer said, "There is the orchard; go to it." He didn't even ask whether any of the workers knew what to do. The farmer then disappeared and was not seen again until the picking crews reported at the packing house at the end of their day's work. No drinking water was provided and there were no toilet facilities whatsoever.

This farmer had asked for 20 pickers although there was sufficient work for only 10 pickers. The result was that the trees were completely stripped, the prunes picked, and the boxes stacked by 3:00 p.m. after only 5 hours work. The average amount earned per person was $1.50 for work under most unsatisfactory conditions.

All of the members of these families considered that they had been imposed upon. They were so disgusted with their treatment that some of them stated that they would not again volunteer for farm work or, if they did, they would not again work for that farmer.

Fortunately such instances as above cited were the exception rather than the rule. Many farmers went to considerable trouble to make the work as agreeable as possible for their Victory workers. They appreciated the fact that these people were sacrificing their week ends to help farmers in our common task of harvesting food for Victory.

Nevertheless, great care should be exercised to insure fair and considerate treatment of Victory workers. Avoidable unsatisfactory working conditions are likely to undermine morale and deter city families and school children from volunteering for farm work. Each locality should insure that all farmers who are likely to employ Victory workers will provide them with proper equipment nd facilities. City people want to help.

Before leaving this subject, it should be stressed that most farmers are likely to find that because of the slower rate of output by inexperienced Victory workers, they will need more equipment than would be required where more experienced regular workers are employed.

Wages

During the course of this investigation information was collected in each important farming locality on wages paid for different tasks during the past season. Wage rates varied in the same locality without any apparent rhyme or reason. Such rates as often as not appeared to have no direct relation

to the importance or disagreeableness of the task to be performed. For example, a farmer would pay prune pickers 18 cents a box and tomato pickers working on the same day in an adjacent field 15 cents a box of the same size. Picking tomatoes is a much less back-breaking task than grovelling for small prunes in the dust and grass under trees. Yet it was possible for a moderately efficient tomato picker to earn from 60 to 75 cents an hour, whereas an equally efficient and diligent prune picker would be hard put to earn 30 cents an hour.

Hourly and piece rates often varied in the same locality on the same day as between farms. One farmer would pay 18 cents for a box of prunes, another farmer 25 cents. One farmer would pay 20 cents a bag for picking up walnuts, another farmer 20 cents a box. Wages for tomato pickers varied from 10 to 15 cents a box on the same day in the same locality, often regardless of yield per acre or type of tomatoes picked. Wages for pear pickers varied from 40 to as much as 75 cents an hour or from 8 to 15 cents a box. The same was true for wages paid to peach pickers and crews working in citrus orchards, and harvesting peas, beans, and root vegetables.

Such a condition leads to endless confusion and discontent among workers, whether they are regular itinerant workers, school children, or adult volunteers from the city. The hourly and daily wage earned is of course of paramount importance to the regular itinerant worker, as this is his or her main source of income. Such workers will avoid localities, farmers, and tasks where the wages are too low. The hourly and daily wage received by school children is an important factor influencing their efficiency and morale. Although they are partly actuated by patriotic motives, the great majority of them are earning money for the first time. They have become wage conscious. On returning to school each youngster compares his wages with those earned by other youngsters. They tend to become discontented if they find that other youngsters have earned more money than they have merely because they were paid a higher piece rate or a higher hourly rate for the same task. It is not the amount of the wage so much as the variation between farm and localities that causes discontent. The volunteer city worker places still less stress upon the amount of the wage -- hourly or piece work. The city worker is, however, likely to feel that he has been victimized or treated unfairly if he finds that other workers performing the same type of work have received higher wages.

Another source of grievance, especially to the city worker, is that he will not know until he is actually on a farm what wages he will receive. For instance, Mr. Y would be informed by the office of the U. S. Employment Service in his city that he will receive 25 cents a box for picking prunes. He will be directed to report at the placement office (often Farm Security Administration Office) in the locality where he is to work. The placement office will instruct Mr. Y and his party to go to the farm of Mr. Doe where he and each member of his party will be paid 22 cents a box for picking prunes. On arriving at the farm of Mr. Doe, they will be informed that he will pay 22 cents a box if Mr. Y and his party will knock off and pick up prunes, but only 18 cents if they only pick up prunes. Mr. Y on returning home after earning $2.00 for 7 hours' work in a dusty orchard on a hot day, learns from his friends that they, working on another farm, were paid 25 cents an hour merely to pick up prunes. In all likelihood Mr. Y will be so disgusted that he will not go out again.

One of the most unsatisfactory features of the wage situation from the farmers' standpoint during the past season was the tendency for wages in many

farming areas to skyrocket after the season had opened. For instance, in several peach-growing areas of the state, farmers had agreed upon a wage of 8 cents a box -- a wage which would enable a good picker to earn upwards of 60 cents an hour. As the harvesting season advanced and the labor situation became more tense, many farmers raised the rate to 10 cents a box in order to "pirate" workers from other farmers or to attract them from other areas. A panicky condition soon developed, under which wages were gradually increased to 18 and 20 cents a box and in some instances 22 cents a box. Instances were cited where a few experienced pickers were able to earn as much as $20 a day or more -- a wage that few technical workers in war plants could top. Neither the arduousness and danger of the task nor the importance of the work would justify such fantastic wages.

Although increases in wage rates in other areas and for other crops were not as marked as in the above example, there was a widespread tendency for wages to increase as the harvesting season advanced and for labor "pirating." Such pr ctices cannot but be harmful to the farming industry. They place an unreasonably heavy wage load on individual farmers.

Every effort should be made in each farming locality (with proper co-ordination as between localities) to establish fair and reasonable wages and to see that individual farmers abide by these wage scales. Payment of wages above or below the established level will be detrimental to the best interests of farmers and workers generally. If it is found necessary at a later date to raise or lower the general level of wages this should be done only after agreement by all the farmers in the locality rather than to be left to the discretion or whim of individual farmers.

It is almost as important for farmers collectively to insure that there is some balance between the scales of wages paid for different tasks. There seems to be little logic in a differential of only 5 to 10 cents a box for picking prunes over that paid for picking tomatoes. A good worker could easily pick 4 or 5 boxes of tomatoes an hour, but would be hard put to it to pick 2 boxes of prunes an hour. Some adjustment in wages would be necessary also to compensate for the fact that some orchards or fields yield more heavily than others and that some crops (tomatoes and cotton, for instance) yield rather lightly for the first and last picking and more heavily for the intermediate picking or pickings. This problem would not be so important for crews employed for the full harvesting season. The good and poor orchards would tend to be averaged out and the early, intermediate, and late pickings also averaged out. The difficulty would arise chiefly with city volunteer workers who may be employed some on picking in orchards or fields where the yield is heavy, others where the yield is light.

One more problem of a similar nature requires mention. Statements were made to the effect that many farmers followed the practice of employing the regular itinerant fruit pickers upon the best fields and in the best orchards and sent crews of high school youngsters and city volunteer workers into the low-yielding fields and orchards. From the farmer's standpoint there may be considerable merit for such a practice. In normal times it is sound economic policy to combine the good factors of production -- good workers with good land and good equipment. During time of war, however, the soundness of such a practice can be questioned. In the first place, large numbers of regular itinerant workers are enabled to earn so much money in 4 or 5 days that they lay off for 2 or 3 days each week. Thus high wages result in lesser output per week, accompanied by an abnormal increase in leisure. In the second place,

volunteer workers (whether children or adults) are likely to resent the discrimination involved. Finally, persons not familiar with the actual conditions are led to make unfavorable comparisons as to the efficiency of the different groups of laborers involved. It is obviously unfair to compare the number of boxes of tomatoes picked a day by a crew of school children in a poor field with the number picked by a crew of regular itinerant pickers in a good field. Yet such comparisons are made constantly. This undermines morale. The difficulty can be obviated to a great extent by having a sliding scale of wages adjusted to yield. Such plans have been found to work satisfactorily in the citrus industry and for sugar topping and loading. An extension to other industries and tasks would appear to be advisable.

Transportation

Lack of adequate transportation facilities constituted a serious bottleneck to full employment of available farm labor last season. It is likely to be an even more serious problem during 1943. This indicates the need for proper mobilization and efficient use of all trucks and busses available in each locality. No usable facilities should be allowed to remain idle. This is not a problem that can be handled by individual farmers, although each farmer should be responsible for the proper upkeep of his trucks and automobiles. Mobilization and full use of facilities for transporting farm labor should be regarded as a community affair. The government has indicated that private automobiles or trucks should be regarded as community or national assets which individuals merely hold in trust. Accepting this viewpoint, it would not serve our national goal of all-out food production if farmer A had a truck that was idle one or two days a week, while the rest of the farmers in a community lacked sufficient transportation to move the picking crews from concentration points to the farms and ranches.

It should be feasible in most farming areas to form a loose voluntary pool for all school busses and trucks owned by individual farmers. Some individual or agency could be entrusted with the duty of seeing each day that any truck which will not be used fully by the farmer who owns it is made available for use by other farmers in transporting labor.

In this connection it may well happen that a number of city families will still be willing to use their private automobiles in working on nearby farms. It is highly important that such volunteers by supplied with explicit instructions for reaching the farm where they are to work. During the past season many city volunteers spent much valuable time and used much precious rubber in trying to find farms where they were going to work on a Saturday or Sunday. This problem could be handled by supplying the volunteer family or party with a map or sketch of the areas in which the farm is located with all roads and distinguishable features clearly marked. If road maps are used, these could be handed back to the farmer when the party reports for work. This will mean additional work for the farmer or some other agency, but it is a service that will be greatly appreciated by the city volunteers.

Labor Saving

During the past season many city people complained rather bitterly that producers of certain crops had made no effort to introduce labor-saving devices.

Volunteer city workers from the Bay cities pointed out that they were required to knock prunes, walnuts, and almonds off onto the ground and then grub for them among the clods and dry grass. One worker stated that if a canvas (or large cloth) were spread below a tree just before knocking, the work could have been performed in considerably less time. Another worker suggested that if canvas were not available, sheets of paper would serve the same general purpose.

The writer and his family had experiences that bore out these complaints. The situation was particularly aggravating when trees that bore lightly or had fruit or nuts of diminutive size had to be picked. Under such circumstances it took almost an hour for a reasonably hard worker to fill a box.

It is realized, of course, that it is not always possible to introduce labo r-saving devices. For example, a considerable volume of good prunes drop off the trees before the final knocking. These would either have to be picked up first or left on the ground. On the other hand, it probably wouldn't take a crew long to pick up the fruit already on the ground before knocking and then to spread a cover to catch the fruit that is knocked off. Furthermore, even if certain labor-saving devices were feasible, shortage of equipment might prevent their construction.

It would be desirable that each farmer and each community give greater attention to the problem of introducing labor-saving devices wherever this proves feasible. It will undoubtedly improve the morale of workers to know that such devices have been introduced or to be told why they are not feasible.

Recreation

There is an old saying that "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Long periods of continuous work without diversion undoubtedly decrease mental alertness and decrease interest in work. This is particularly true of school children and especially the school children who are willing to work for several weeks at harvesting crops. These youngsters will have completed about eight months of work at school with hardly a break. Their normal vacation period will be devoted to working on farms. Both their morale and their efficiency will be enhanced if they can be assured of a certain amount of recreation and diversion. They should have at least one day or one and a half days free from work each week.

Everything possible should be done to see that their free time, evenings after work, and free time each week is devoted to some form of recreation or relaxation. School children left to their own devices are likely to become rowdy, to get into mischief, and to stay up late. They should have organized games in the evening or community singing or dancing or swimming. Week-end excursions to nearby places of interest, hikes and picnics, and attendance at religious services should be encouraged. It will often be difficult for individual farmers, employing only a few youngsters, to plan and provide adequate recreation and diversion. This is a task that could well be undertaken by the community.

It is understood that school authorities, Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. groups which propose to operate camps for school children during the coming season are giving considerable attention to planned recreation. These agencies, however, may not be able to operate in all communities employing Victory labor.

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In such cases the local community will have to do its own planning. Even where schools and other agencies do operate camps, a local recreational committee may be advantageous. It could cooperate with the school and other agencies in mobilizing local facilities and in opening homes of local families to the youngsters.

Recreational facilities should not be confined to school children only, although they are most likely to benefit therefrom. Adult volunteer workers too would appreciate and benefit from such facilities. It should be borne in mind that these people too are foregoing their usual excursions and relaxation in order to harvest food for Victory. They would welcome local hospitality and such recreational facilities as the community can provide. They could be permitted to join picnics and hikes and so on. Access to library facilities would also be appreciated.